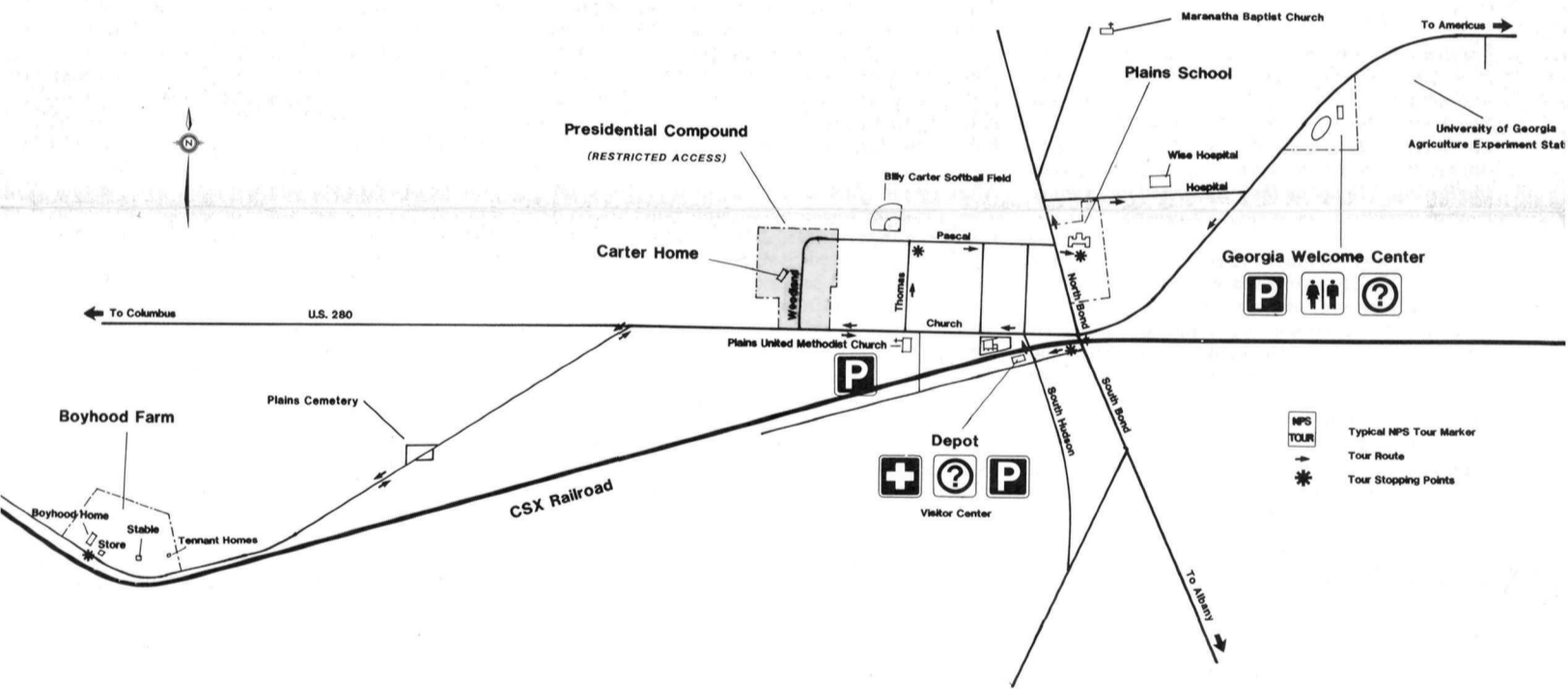
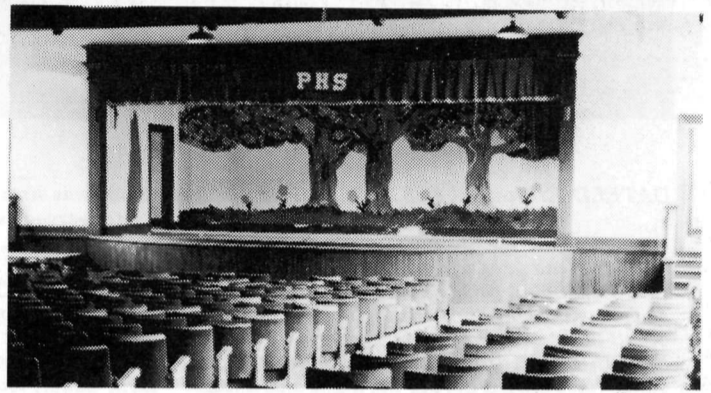
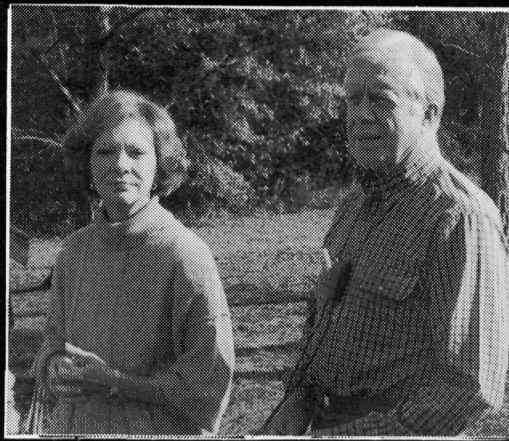


Jimmy Carter

National Historic Site
Georgia

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Carter Boyhood Home



Depot

For Your Safety

You are encouraged to walk the sidewalks of Plains to get a closer look at this charming little town, but please be careful to obey all traffic laws.

Do not attempt to enter the Carter compound. The house and grounds are under the protection of the United States Secret Service.

About Your Visit

Jimmy Carter National Historic Site is located ten miles west of Americus, Georgia on U.S. Highway 280. The Railroad Depot located in the downtown area is currently used for the park's visitor center and contains a small museum developed by the Plains Historical Trust. The visitor center is open daily from 9:00 AM until 5:00 PM.

Jimmy Carter National Historic Site is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Andersonville National Historic Site, Rt. 1, Box 85, Andersonville, GA 31711 is in immediate charge.

Jimmy Carter



"I have come to realize that in every person there is something fine and pure and noble, along with a desire for self-fulfillment. Political and religious leaders must attempt to provide a society within which these human attributes can be nurtured and enhanced."

Jimmy Carter, 39th President

DATELINE: November 3, 1976, Daybreak Plains, Georgia

Excitement at the Jimmy Carter Presidential Election Headquarters in the old Seaboard Railroad Depot is at a high fever. This tiny town is packed with thousands of people who have been up all night celebrating Mr. Carter's win. Fires burn in metal drums along the streets, three bands have played during the night and a huge television screen mounted on a building across from the depot has continuously flashed the election returns. It is impossible to drive in Plains; only residents that know the backroads can get in or out of town.

Pandemonium breaks out anew as a motorcade from Atlanta arrives carrying Jimmy Carter, the first person to be elected President from the Deep South since the Civil War. As the sun rises over the horizon, President-elect Jimmy Carter addresses this tremendous crowd of supporters from the Railroad Depot as their upturned faces shine with enthusiasm, warmth, and pride.

More than any President in recent years, Jimmy Carter is closely identified with his hometown. Americans marvel at how a man from such an isolated, small-town upbringing came to broaden his horizons to eventually aspire to the highest office in the country. Even the hometown people were initially surprised by his decision to seek the Presidency. "It was a little shocking that someone we knew wanted to be President, but if Jimmy wanted to be President, why not?" said Mrs. Maxine Reese, campaign manager at the Plains headquarters.

Why not, indeed! The townspeople of Plains rolled up their sleeves and eagerly set to work to help elect their native son to the Presidency. The Democratic National Committee was thrilled when the town of Plains put on a covered dish campaign dinner that raised one million dollars, the most ever raised at a single fundraising event. Hometown support was obvious when an eighteen-car passenger train, dubbed the "Peanut Express", departed from the Plains depot filled to capacity with ecstatic passengers bound for the 39th Presidential Inauguration.

The rural southern culture of Plains that revolves around farming, church and school had a large influence in molding Mr. Carter's character and in shaping his political policies. For this reason, the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District was established to interpret the life and Presidency of Jimmy Carter and to preserve the history of a small rural southern town.

Jimmy Carter

Born in Plains, Georgia on October 1, 1924, Jimmy Carter grew up on a farm three miles outside of Plains. His father, James Earl Carter, Sr. was a farmer and storekeeper. His mother, "Miss Lillian", was a registered nurse. They raised eldest son Jimmy, his two sisters, Ruth and Gloria, and younger brother Billy in a life that was closely attuned to the cycles of nature. The children were brought up with the responsibility of chores, a respect for education, and an example of service to others.

After graduating from Plains High School in 1941, Jimmy Carter spent one year at Georgia Southwestern College in Americus and another at Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta while awaiting his appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. After graduating from the Academy in the summer of 1946, he married Rosalynn Smith, also from Plains. For the next seven years the Carter

family was stationed in various ports, where Mr. Carter served as a nuclear physicist. During this time three sons, Jack, Chip and Jeff, were born.

In 1953 Earl Carter died, and Jimmy Carter decided to resign from his naval career and return to Plains to help the family with their peanut farm and family business, a seed and farm supply store. After his return, he soon began to help the local community in service to his church, board of education, and local planning commissions.

Jimmy Carter's state political career began in 1963 when he served for two years as a State Senator. His first run for Governor of Georgia in 1966 ended in defeat to Lester Maddox, but he ran again in 1971 and won the state's Governorship. By this time, a daughter, Amy, had been born to the Carter family.

After serving his four year term as Governor, Jimmy Carter began his preparations to run for the Presidency in 1975. He was inaugurated in 1977 as the United States' 39th President, the first President to be elected from Georgia. Mr. Carter's Presidential years are covered in depth at the Carter Presidential Library in Atlanta, Georgia.

Both Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter continue to live active lives of public service, carrying out many of the goals they worked on during their White House years. Mr. Carter is on the faculty at Emory University and continues to work on exploring ways for world peace through his Carter Center, which is associated with Emory. Both Carters have written books.

Mr. and Mrs. Carter have jointly taken up hammer and saw for the Habitat for Humanity organization, a nonprofit group which builds affordable housing for the poor. They are still involved with the Friendship Force, an exchange program which Mrs. Carter started during the White House years, that promotes friendship and understanding among people from different cultures. Mr. and Mrs. Carter can often be seen attending Sunday school and worship services at Maranatha Baptist Church in Plains.

Plains, Georgia

In the 1840's a town called "The Plains of Dura" was established in southwest Sumter County. The name, taken from a biblical quotation in the Book of Daniel, aptly describes the flat landscape of the area. When the Americus, Preston, and Lumpkin Railroad expanded their line in the 1880's from Americus to Lumpkin, "The Plains of



Dura" merged with two small nearby communities and relocated next to the railroad. This newly located town took on the shorter name of "Plains."

By the 1920's, Plains had become a "boom town" with a population of over 600. Services included two banks, two drug stores, a cotton gin, a hotel, a dentist and an undertaker. The most famous establishment was the Wise Sanitarium, a hospital that was renowned for its medical innovations.

Plains has always been a rural town, operating as the center of commerce for the farming community that surrounds it. In 1919, sixty-six cars of hogs and cows were shipped from the depot in the largest amount shipped from any point in the United States that year. Six to ten thousand bales of cotton were shipped annually from Plains in the 1920's. Agriculture was the dominant factor in most of the resident's lives, as they toiled long hours working the fertile soil. When electricity was brought to the rural areas in the 1930's, significant changes took place in everyone's daily life. In reference to his childhood, Jimmy Carter said, "An almost unbelievable change took place in our lives when electricity came to the farm.... In general, our family's horizons were expanded greatly."

The town's rapid growth in the 1920's ceased during the depression years of the 1930's and the population has remained under 700 people. This area continues to be primarily agricultural with main crops of peanuts, soybeans, cotton, corn, pecans, and small grains.

The Plains school system always had an excellent reputation, largely as the result of the superintendent and teacher, Miss Julia L. Coleman, who served from 1908 until 1958. During her fifty years with the school, she was a positive influence on her pupils, encouraging them to expand their search for knowledge far beyond the usual requirements of the typical rural school. So great was Miss Coleman's influence on our 39th President, that Mr. Carter mentioned her in his inaugural address. The Plains High School, constructed in 1921, graduated its last class in 1979. The next year the school consolidated with the Sumter County system.

In 1975 when Jimmy Carter began his race for the Presidency, national attention was focused on this small southern town. By the time Mr. Carter was inaugurated, the town was a beehive of activity, with press and tourists crowding the streets. Now that Mr. Carter is no longer in public office, the crowds have declined as people come hoping to catch a glimpse of Jimmy Carter and to see this little southern town that gave the nation a President.

Future Plans

A General Management Plan for the use and development of the Historic Site and Preservation District will be drawn up by the National Park Service. Until this plan is completed, the structures associated with Carter sites will be in a preservation status with limited maintenance and use. Decisions on the use of these historic structures and the future development of the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site will be determined during this public planning process.

For Further Information

The Jimmy Carter Presidential Library is located at One Coppenhill Avenue, Atlanta, GA, 30307. The library and exhibit are open Monday through Saturday from 9:00 AM - 4:45 PM and on Sundays from noon until 4:45 PM.